

COLUMBIA RIVER REGIONAL FORUM

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT TEAM

May 2, 2008 Conference Call

FACILITATOR'S SUMMARY NOTES ON FUTURE ACTIONS

Facilitator: Robin Gumpert

Notes: Erin Halton

The following notes are a summary of issues that are intended to point out future actions or issues that may need further discussion at upcoming meetings. These notes are not intended to be the "record" of the meeting, only a reminder for TMT members.

SOR 2008-C1

Kyle Dittmer, CRITFC, reported on SOR 2008-C1, requesting a one foot operating pool as a hard constraint at Bonneville, The Dalles and John Day dams for May 5-8th to support spring treaty fishing. He clarified that there may or may not be more than one week of treaty fishing and that net flight surveys were planned for 5/6. The COE said they planned to operate the projects as they have in previous years: with a 1' soft constraint (75.5 ft - 76.5 ft) and a 1.5' hard constraint (75.0 ft - 76.5 ft) at Bonneville, a 1.5' foot constraint (262.5 ft - 264 ft) at John Day and a 3' constraint (157 to 160 ft range) at The Dalles.

Action/Next Steps: Bob Heinith, CRITFC, suggested that further discussion with the COE was needed off line to address operations, particularly at The Dalles. He also said CRITFC would communicate any decisions made at a scheduled Tribal meeting on 5/9.

SOR 2008-2

As follow up from the 4/30 TMT conference call, the following information was shared regarding current operations and conditions:

- Grand Coulee was at elevation 1229.3' with a flood control elevation limit of 1228.8' beginning May 4. The project was operating as needed to meet average weekly flows at McNary of 180 kcfs.
- Albeni Falls was passing inflows, about 28 kcfs.
- Libby was operating at a minimum 4 kcfs and was 7 feet below flood control.
- McNary flows ranged from 170-200 kcfs, so the 180 kcfs weekly average objective was being met.

In addition, Jason Flory, USFWS, shared that some members of the Kootenai Sturgeon Recovery Team had discussed the SOR. Though not speaking on behalf of Sturgeon Recovery Team, Jason expressed no immediate concerns with either proposal (2008-2 or the more recently submitted Montana SOR) but he did express concern for temperature management for the sturgeon. Concerns were also raised regarding fluctuating flows out of Libby; preference was for steady flows.

Migration numbers were shared: Rock Island yearling chinook numbers had increased to 648 on May 1 (up from 40-50 the previous week); not as big an increase in steelhead numbers but still an increase, up to the mid-30s. McNary numbers had increased as well – 6,000 counted on 4/28 and 11,000 counted on 5/1. Jerry Marco, Colville Tribe, shared that the estimates were much lower than the historical, that signs of the pending freshet were seen in some of the tributaries, e.g. Spokane flows had increased to 3500 cfs. Again, the flows compared to historic were low.

Jim Litchfield presented an SOR on behalf of Montana that coupled the current recommendation with Montana's traditional recommendation for summer operations at Libby and Hungry Horse. This was included in the draft 2008 BiOp and Montana's hope was to move the issue to agreement at the Regional Forum this year (despite the court order to rollover operations from 2007) – an agreement Montana believed would allow the operation to be implemented this year as it likely will be implemented in the future. He offered the SOR as a start to the discussion.

Finally, a series of graphs were shared from Seattle District COE to show potential impacts to increasing flows at Libby to 9 kcfs. The take away message was that an increase in flows could lead to a 0-2 foot difference in peak elevation; no impact to sturgeon pulse operations; and up to a 2-day delay in average cresting of the peak elevation.

TMT members weighed in on the proposed operations:

- Colville Tribe: Actively object to SOR 2008-2, particularly the use of Grand Coulee to meet flows at McNary, and elevated the issue to IT (see separate memo for specific concerns).
- Oregon: With not enough technical information to be able to inform a good decision on summer operations, not comfortable coupling the two proposed operations. Support moving forward with SOR 2008-2; consider Montana proposal at TMT when more is known.
- Idaho: Support implementing SOR 2008-2; signed MOA to support the Montana operation but agree with Oregon to consider the two operations separately at this point.
- Washington: Fish migrations numbers are increasing and will only go up from here. It appears that implementation of SOR 2008-2 would have minimal effect overall on Grand Coulee elevations, so support implementation. Do not see the connection between the Montana proposal and this SOR, and feel it is important for TMT to commit to discussing the separate proposal in a timely manner.
- Montana: Appreciate Washington's comments. Feels the new BiOp should supercede all other operations for this year – and because of the judge's ruling to roll over 2007 operations, recognize that uncertainty exists. Accept Washington's suggestion to move forward with SOR 2008-2 and discuss the Montana proposal in late May or early June. Does believe that making a decision now on this could work. Noted a high level of frustration that the issue still is not resolved after years of effort, and may decide to take the issue to IT for discussion in the near future.

- NOAA: Support implementing SOR 2008-2; understand and share Montana's frustration and reason for putting the proposal forward. Implementation would be inconsistent with NOAA's commitment to the court to roll over 2007 operations – *and* if agreement is reached amongst the regional parties, would support implementation. Did not hear that the region is willing to go there today.
- USFWS: Our species of concern would not be impacted by either SOR. Given the responses from other TMT members, would like to defer discussion of Montana's proposed summer operations to another time. Support moving forward with SOR 2008-2.
- COE: Supports SOR 2008-2 and is prepared to increase flows at Libby to 9 kcfs, continue passing inflows at Albeni Falls, and will need to revisit the operation weekly.
- BOR: Recognize the difficulty weighing local impacts with other needs. Will support SOR 2008-2 to draft Grand Coulee to the extent needed to meet average weekly flows at McNary of 180 kcfs in support of ESA listed fish migrating in the system. Given flows from Albeni Falls and Libby, and the pending low snow pack runoff, believe the draft will be minimal if at all, and short term. Will need to monitor the system closely, and revisit as needed.
- BPA: Support SOR 2008-2 and recognize the many trade offs involved.

Action/Next Steps:

The Colville Tribe will work with the facilitation team to draft a memo to IT framing the policy question, and send it to TMT members and IT members on Monday morning, 5/5.

- An IT call was set for 1:00 pm on Monday, 5/5.
- **UPDATE:** During the 5/5 IT call, the issue was discussed and an agreement was reached to try to meet the flow objectives at McNary without drafting Coulee below an elevation that would adversely affect the navigation of the ferry at Lake Roosevelt. This operation will be further discussed at the 5/7 TMT meeting.

**Columbia River Regional Forum
Technical Management Team Conference Call
May 2, 2008**

1. Introduction

Today's TMT call was chaired by Jim Adams (COE) and facilitated by Robin Gumpert (D.S. Consulting), with representatives of NOAA, COE, USFWS, BPA, BOR, CRITFC, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, the Spokane and Colville tribes, and others attending in person or by phone. The following is a summary (not a verbatim transcript) of the topics discussed and decisions made at the meeting. Anyone with questions or comments about these notes should provide them to the TMT chair or bring them to the next meeting.

2. 2008 Spring Treaty Fishery – SOR 2008-C-1

Kyle Dittmer (CRITFC) presented this SOR for the spring tribal fishery, requesting that the pools above Bonneville, The Dalles and John Day dams be operated within a 1-foot flow band as a hard system constraint from 6 am Monday, May 6, through 6 pm Thursday, May 8. It's possible that CRITFC will request additional treaty fisheries in May, and will notify the COE of specific times as soon as possible. Spring is the most critical time for tribal fishers to exercise their treaty rights, Dittmer explained. CRITFC sponsors a series of net flights to supply COE-RCC staff with aerial photographs showing the locations of tribal fishers' platforms and nets. Fluctuations in the river level beyond 1 foot create difficult conditions for fishing.

The COE plans to operate as it has for previous fishery requests, Jim Adams said. The Bonneville pool will be operated to a 1.5-foot band (75.0 – 76.5 feet) as a hard constraint, and within a 1-foot band as a soft constraint (75.5 - 76.5 feet elevation). The Dalles pool will be operated within its normal 3-foot range (157 – 160 feet). The John Day pool will operate within its normal 1.5-foot band (262.5 - 264 feet) as a hard constraint. CRITFC and COE representatives agreed to have offline discussions regarding operations during Treaty Fisheries, via the recently-signed MOU process.

3. Grand Coulee/Libby Operations – SOR 2008-2 and SOR 2008-MT-1

SOR 2008-2. A TMT conference call two days ago focused on SOR 2008-2, a recommendation by the Salmon Managers to meet a 180 kcfs weekly average flow objective at McNary Dam through augmentation from Albeni Falls, Grand Coulee and Libby reservoirs.

Today's call focused on three aspects of this request on which more information was needed: (1) flows that would result from the operation SOR-2008-2 recommends; (2) possible impacts to sturgeon from this operation; and

(3) an alternative request, SOR 2008-MT-1, which was presented today alongside the original system operation request. A fourth consideration, potential impacts of flow augmentation on ferry operations at Lake Roosevelt, was presented by members of the Colville Tribe.

Current Reservoir Conditions. The current elevation of Grand Coulee reservoir is 1,229.3 feet, with a flood control elevation of 1,228.8 feet, John Roache (BOR) said. The reservoir is being slowly drafted with the intention of maintaining weekly average flows of 180 kcfs at McNary. Albeni Falls is passing inflows, currently 28 kcfs with a slight possibility of spill, Cathy Hlebechuk (COE) said. Libby is currently 7 feet below its flood control elevation, releasing minimum flows of 4 kcfs. No particular flow volume was identified from Libby in this SOR; discussion on April 30 focused on 9 kcfs per day, with approximately 5 kcfs of additional output resulting from this SOR. Flows at McNary over the past 5 days have ranged from 170-200 kcfs, with a weekly average of 180-190 kcfs.

Kyle Dittmer asked, was there a change in meeting the flow objective due to operational changes resulting from Wednesday's discussion? The COE hasn't yet changed its operations, Hlebechuk said. There was discussion of the stipulation, made during Wednesday's call that the request called for a weekly average (not a minimum flow) of 180 kcfs. Recommending a weekly average allows flows to dip slightly below 180 kcfs on weekends, Wagner said. This adheres to prior versions of the WMP, which called for weekend flows at McNary to be no less than 80% of the weekday average.

Impacts of Flow Augmentation on Sturgeon. The sturgeon recovery team is an official USFWS recovery team, and as such provides recommendations to USFWS only, Jason Flory (USFWS) emphasized. Thus it is outside the scope of the team's function to make operational recommendations to COE or TMT. Individual members may do so, but not the team as a whole. That said, the team would not have a problem with SOR 2008-2 as long as the operation doesn't negatively impact temperature control for the sturgeon pulse, Flory explained. Special gates are installed each year at Libby to pull specific layers of colder water from the reservoir for the sturgeon flows, and extra water coming from the reservoir for this request should not be allowed to impact that operation. Hlebechuk asked whether dropping Libby outflows from a 9 kcfs rate down to 4 kcfs for initial controlled flows would negatively impact the sturgeon operation. Changes in river flows should not be problematic since the primary concern is temperature management, Flory replied. The sturgeon operation might not need to begin until 3-4 weeks from now.

Paul Wagner gave an update on overall migration status. The passage index for yearling Chinook at Rock Island rose from 523 on April 30 to 648 on May 1. Steelhead passage numbers have increased from single digits to the low teens, and are now around 35. Passage at McNary rose from 6,000 on April 28 to 11,000 on May 1, which represents mid-Columbia and Snake River fish.

While yearling Chinook numbers indeed have jumped, their passage is still estimated at only 10.5% of the run. In the past 25 years, about 25% of the run has typically passed by this time, Jerry Marko (Colville Tribe) said. Once the migration does begin to pick up, it continues to climb. Subbasin elevations upstream are on the rise, so spring runoff is coming, but taking its time.

SOR 2008-MT-1. Jim Litchfield (Montana) presented this SOR, which has two biological objectives: (1) supporting downstream migration by providing the outflows requested in SOR 2008-2, and (2) implementing the Montana operation from July through September at Libby and Hungry Horse reservoirs to provide habitat for Montana's resident fish in addition to flow augmentation.

There was discussion of what will trigger a change in operations when the freshet has begun. The initial controlled flow starts on the date the COE begins modeling what unregulated flows would be at The Dalles, Hlebechuk said. The ICF is late this year due to colder than usual temperatures and will probably begin in mid-May, Kyle Dittmer (CRITFC) said. Without something more definitive, it's unclear when the operation requested in SOR 2008-2 will change, said a Colville Tribe representative.

Impacts on Ferry Operations at Lake Roosevelt. Colville Tribe representatives presented concerns about the impact a drop in elevations would have on the operation of the Incheleum ferry that serves approximately 725 vehicles per day. The tribe requested that Grand Coulee elevation be kept at a minimum of 1,228.8 feet for navigation purposes. John Roache pointed out that elevation 1228.8 ft is the flood control elevation at Grand Coulee which is the maximum elevation until released from flood control. There is not much room for day to day operational flexibility if Grand Coulee is not allowed to draft below or fill above elevation 1228.8 feet. Pulling water volumes out of Grand Coulee to meet the 180 kcfs weekly average flow objective at McNary could cause the elevation of the lake to drop below the level at which the ferry can safely operate. There was an effort to pinpoint the exact elevation at which the ferry can no longer operate. The latest estimate places that elevation at around 1,228 feet.

Cathy Hlebechuk presented graphs (attached to today's agenda) to help TMT analyze the SORs, modeling up to 9 kcfs difference in inflows at Grand Coulee. There was discussion of the water volumes involved in implementing SOR 2008-2. The largest difference in peak reservoir elevation during any year modeled is approximately 2 feet. In 20% of the 44 years on record, implementing the SOR would cause no change in reservoir elevations.

Participants stated their views of the SORs for the record:

Oregon – Objected to combining the two requests. It's premature to make decisions now regarding operation of Montana reservoirs this summer. It's also

premature to make decisions based on the 2008 BiOp before it is released. Oregon wants to move forward with the original request for weekly average flows of 180 kcfs at McNary. A decision to implement SOR 2008-2 does not preclude discussions regarding the implementing the Montana operation when the appropriate time comes.

Idaho – Supports SOR 2008-2; echoed Oregon's discomfort with bundling spring and summer operations into one request. Also supports the Montana operation, subject to information that will become available later in the season.

Washington – Supports SOR 2008-2 on the basis that fish migration will only increase, while it appears that the recommended operation will probably have a minimal effect on Grand Coulee elevations. TMT should make a point of addressing Montana's concerns well ahead of when they would need to be implemented to avoid impacting resident fish in Montana reservoirs.

Montana – Believes the 2008 BiOp should take precedence over the court-ordered rollover of 2007 operations. Suggested scheduling TMT's discussion of the Montana operation in late May or early June – despite uncertainties regarding reservoir volumes and inflow rates – in order to avoid the last-minute decision making SOR 2008-MT-1 is trying to prevent. Montana would consider elevating the issue to IT at some point, but not today.

NOAA – Advocates SOR 2008-2 as an opportunity that shouldn't be missed. Understands Montana's frustration with summer operations; however, implementing SOR-2008-MT-1 now would be inconsistent with the court order to roll over 2007 operations. The court has left that decision up to the regional parties, requiring only that consensus be reached. Believes an augmentation volume of 180 kcfs will have minimal impact on Grand Coulee operations. Has also asked Idaho Power to pass inflows and not refill Brownlee reservoir at this time. When the freshet comes, it could be fast and furious, causing excessive TDG levels. Whatever can be done now to accelerate migration and get fish out of the river now should be done, not only to avoid exposing listed species to excessive predation and TDG levels, but to take advantage of a rare opportunity this year – good ocean conditions.

USFWS – Supports a detailed discussion of the Montana summer draft at a more appropriate time. For procedural reasons, requested that the second bullet on page 3 of SOR 2008-MT-1 be deleted, "Limit spill to avoid exceeding Montana state TDG standard of 110% when possible, and in a manner consistent with the Action Agencies' responsibilities for ESA-listed resident fish." The USFWS does not want a discussion of sturgeon operations to become dependent on the Montana SOR. Dave Wills and Jim Litchfield agreed to discuss this issue offline before TMT reconsiders the Montana operation in late May or early June.

CRITFC – Supports SOR 2008-2, but agreed with other TMT representatives that the current request should not be tied to the summer operation of Montana's reservoirs.

COE – Supports SOR 2008-2; agreed to revisit Montana's concerns in a timely way, but not at present.

BOR – Is prepared to draft Grand Coulee below its flood control elevation of 1,228.8 feet, but doesn't expect that will be needed to meet the downstream flow objective. The BOR believes that maintaining a weekly flow average of 180 kcfs at McNary is commensurate with the present level of migration activity. The BOR supports SOR 2008-2 for that reason. Shares NOAA's optimism that flows will pick up soon, and increases in Libby discharges will help alleviate the effects on Grand Coulee.

BPA – Supports SOR 2008-2 while recognizing the tradeoffs involved. BPA couldn't guarantee that a minimum elevation of 1,228.8 feet at Grand Coulee will be consistently maintained.

Colville Tribe – Concerned about the uncertainty regarding when the freshet will occur. The main issue is impacts on the Inchelium ferry operations. The Coleville Tribe requested that a minimum elevation of 1,228.8 feet be maintained. (Another state-operated ferry that serves the southeastern corner of the reservation goes out of service when the reservoir hits elevation 1,229 feet.) The Coleville Tribe also has concerns about bank erosion, exposure of archaeological sites, loss of tribal revenue from power generation, and entrainment of resident fish.

Given TMT's general support for the flow augmentation provided in SOR 2008-2, the Colville Tribe requested that this issue be elevated to IT for policy review. Tribal representatives will work with the meeting facilitator to develop a question for IT to consider; TMT representatives agreed to that process. An IT conference call was scheduled for 1 p.m. Monday, May 5.

In the interim, BOR and BPA agreed to make every attempt not to draft Grand Coulee below 1,228 feet, but couldn't guarantee that as a minimum elevation. The COE will operate the three reservoirs in the following manner: Libby outflows will increase tonight from 4 to 9 kcfs. NOAA, BOR, USFWS, BPA, and the Colville Tribes did not object to this increase. Albeni Falls will continue to pass inflows. The Grand Coulee end of April flood control draft to elevation 1,228.8 feet has been postponed from April 30 until May 4 to minimize potential impacts on ferry operations.

4. Next Meetings

An IT meeting was scheduled for 1 p.m. on May 5 to consider Grand Coulee operations. The next regular TMT meeting will be in person on May 7. This summary prepared by consultant and writer Pat Vivian.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
Jerry Marko	Colville Tribe
Paul Wagner	NOAA
Barry Espensen	CBB
Kyle Dittmer	CRITFC
Greg Hoffman	COE Libby Dam
Jason Flory	USFWS Spokane
Rick Kruger	Oregon
Cindy LeFleur	Washington
Bob Heineth	CRITFC
Dave Benner	FPC
Holli Krebs	Bear Energy
Deanna Kunkle	Spokane Tribe
Russ Kiefer	Idaho
Jim Adams	COE
Cathy Hlebechuk	COE
Dave Wills	USFWS
Dan Spear	BPA
John Roache	BOR
Robyn MacKay	BPA
John Wasach	Bear Energy
Kyle Dittmer	CRITFC
Scott Bettin	BPA
Jim Litchfield	Montana
Brian Marotz	Montana
Amy Reese	COE Seattle